

Apprenticeships in Construction and Other Industries

Apprenticeships are important in construction, because the work is craft-based, relying on skilled workers who have a great deal of autonomy. Many people enter the construction crafts through apprenticeship programs, which offer on-the-job training under the close supervision of a craftworker, along with formal classroom instruction. Construction apprenticeships generally take 3 to 4 years, depending on the occupation.

The Bureau of Apprenticeship Training at the U.S. Department of Labor sets quality standards, requiring that apprenticeships registered with the federal government include at least 1 year or 2,000 hours of on-the-job training and recommending 144 hours of formal instruction.

Based on data from the Apprenticeship Information Management System, a database maintained by the Office of Apprenticeship Training/Bureau of Apprenticeship Training, 74% of 230,101 registered apprentices were in about 7,400 construction programs in 2001 (chart 31a). Of the construction workers receiving training, 21% (35,651) were members of racial minorities and 4% (6,064) were women. (The numbers for women and minorities may overlap.)¹ The database system covers only about 60% of the 386,383 apprentices registered with the Bureau of Apprenticeship Training, however.

When apprenticeship numbers are compared with occupational distributions in construction (see chart 12b), it is clear that certain trades have higher rates of apprenticeship

than do others (chart 31b). One reason may be certification requirements – for instance, for electricians – which tend to result in higher rates of apprenticeship.

Joint union-management apprenticeship programs are major providers of skilled labor. For the 36 states for which data are available, typically more than 70% of apprentices are enrolled in the joint programs (*see* chart 31c).

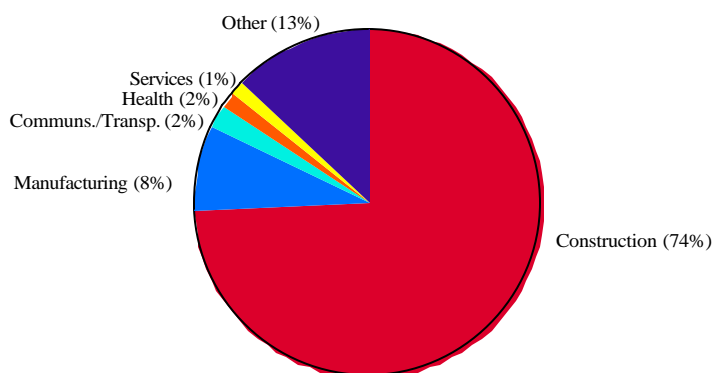
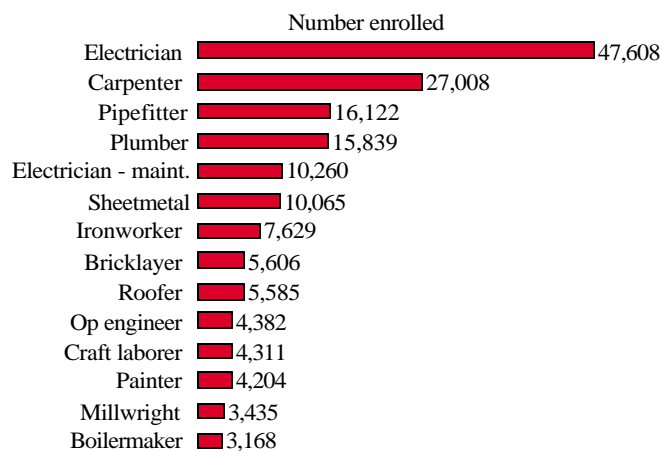
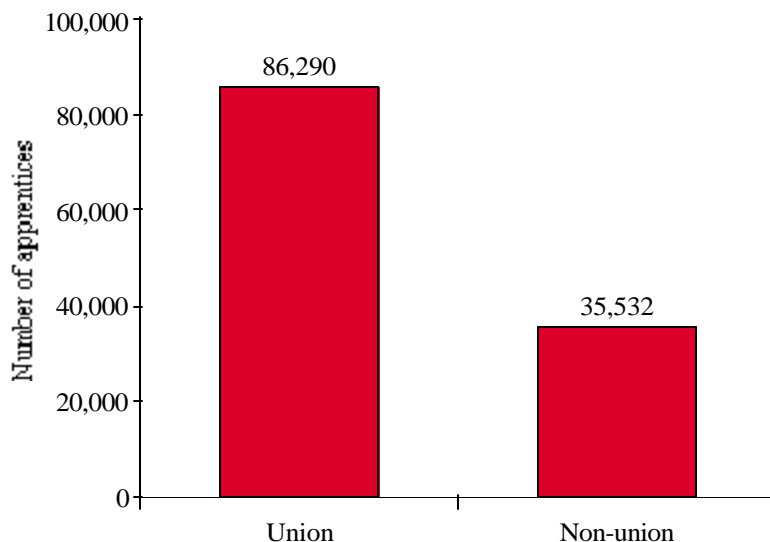
In addition to a higher enrollment rate, the completion rate appears to be higher for the joint union-management programs than the non-union programs. One study found that, of 81,386 new apprentices registered from 1989 through 1991 – more than 70% of them in joint apprenticeship programs – 41% in the joint programs had completed them by 1995, while 25% in non-union apprenticeship programs had graduated.² (The apprentices were followed through November 1995, the most recent month for which data were made available.)

Workers benefit from apprenticeships by advancing their skills and obtaining a credential recognized throughout an industry. For employers, apprenticeship can help ensure that workers learn consistent skills, practices, and safety procedures. In October 2000, the U.S. Department of Labor began a Registered Apprenticeship Awareness Initiative, a program to increase awareness of and support for registered apprenticeship among employers and potential apprentices.³

1. Office of Apprenticeship Training, Employer and Labor Services/Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training, U.S. Department of Labor, *The National Apprenticeship System Programs and Apprentices, Fiscal Year 2001*, April 2002, www.doleta.gov/atels_bat/statistics.asp

2. Cihan Bilginsoy, Apprenticeship Training in the U.S. Construction Industry, unpublished (University of Utah), revised September 1998, based on data from the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training, U.S. Department of Labor.

3. U.S. General Accounting Office, *Registered Apprenticeships, Labor Could Do More to Expand to Other Occupations*, Washington, D.C., GAO-01-940, September 2001, p 9.

31a. Registered apprentices, by industry, 36 states, 2001**31b. Numbers of active apprentices in 14 construction occupations, 36 states, 2001****31c. Number of apprentices in construction, by union status, 36 states, 1999**

Note: All charts - The data do not reflect the entire registered apprenticeship system or provide a nationally representative sample. The District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and the following 14 states do not participate in the Apprenticeship Information Management System (AIMS) used for these charts: California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Louisiana, Maryland, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin.

Charts 31a and 31b - Data are as of Oct. 22, 2001.

Chart 31b - Millwrights install, repair, replace, and dismantle the machinery and heavy equipment used in almost every industry. Although the occupations are construction occupations, the figures may include workers in industries other than construction.

Source: All charts - Office of Apprenticeship Training, Employer and Labor Services / Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training, U.S. Department of Labor, The National Apprenticeship System Programs and Apprentices, Fiscal Year 2001, April 2002, www.doleta.gov/atels_bat/statistics.asp.